

A Brief Introduction to Stotram and Mantra
Compiled By Aruna Kumar
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Based on texts of Sir John Woodroffe and and discussions with V.V. Krishna Rao

The British jurist, Tantric scholar and yogi Sir John Woodroffe explains: "The essence of all this is . . . to concentrate and vitalize thought and will power . . . Mantra, in short is a power (Sakti); power in the form of Sound. The root man means to think. Like the Greek word Logos, mantra means thought and word combined as an expression of creative will."6

Woodroffe explains the dynamics of the continuity of thought and sound in the Tantric model. Thought and sound manifest in four states with sound at one end and thought at the other. Para is the highest state. Here sound is transcendental. It has no particular wavelength and is above name and form. It is the unchanging primeval stratum of all language. It is prime energy or shakti. In its undifferentiated stage it corresponds to Shabdabrahma, the divine vibration that unites all. The second stage is pasyanti or visible sound. It is the telepathic state in which one can almost see the form of the thought. It is the universal level on which all thought takes place. An Indian, a German and an Eskimo can look at a flower and experience the same thought on a nonverbal level. The third is madhyama in which the speaker selects his words through a prism of mental conceptions. The fourth state is Vaikhari, the spoken word, the most concrete state of thought. This is thought translated into the coded state called language. Here the thought implies both name and form.

Woodroffe continues on to say "It is true and certain that supreme Kulakundalini Herself, who is the fifty letters, from A to Ksa, has given birth to this entire universe, consisting of moving and nonmoving things . . . in the eternal body of the Devi. Mantras also, in the form of letters, are eternal Brahman, full of energy, and aspects of herself. Mantras which are seeds, out of which grow the fruit of the universe are eternally present in Her body. For this reason they are called Bijamantras (seed-mantras)."

There are many levels of access to the sound energy. One is through the basical musical element called "Nad" in Sanskrit. The principle is that nad opens a channel into the yogic body (chakras) for the spiritual seeker. The stotrams are an example of the multiple levels at which one may access this energy. The stotrams when it is chanted in entirety is engaging the individual at multiple levels – mental focus, physical calmness and through the sounds of each of the stotram the yogic body is gently made aware. It allows for the spiritually uninitiated individual to begin their spiritual seeking. Those more involved may choose to then use each one of the names as an individual mantra. This will have to be done individually – not in a group setting.

The times of sunrise and sunset are very helpful for spiritual practice as there is a change in energy that makes the body more conducive to engaging inward.

Every minute, hour and day are governed by the impact of certain attributes. These attributes are related to planetary motion and certain stotrams are significant for certain planetary attributes – such as Venus for Lalitha Sahasranamam. Friday is the day that is most significant for realizing the benefits of Lalitha Sahasranamam. However, everyday is good for practice. The midnight hour is generally not relegated for humanistic endeavors.

What to expect from these sessions:

15 minutes of listening to recitation at the beginning of each session

1 hour of learning to recite 20 verses.

We will not go over the first 20 each week. We will just continue to work through the 183 verses.

The goal is to come to each class having worked through the past 20.

Individual private sessions are available upon request at \$10/- per session.